

Letter from Taizé

1 February – March 2000 Bimonthly 3.50 FF

Translated into 58 different languages (including 23 Asian ones and 7 African ones), this letter was written by Brother Roger of Taizé. It will be a starting point for reflection during the weekly meetings at Taizé throughout the year 2000.

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Wherever you may be across the continents, you want to become aware of the mystery that lies at the heart of your heart: can you sense the profound beauty of the human soul?

What is this hidden beauty? It lies in the audacity of a longing. Even if we are unaware of it, one of the most intimate desires of our being is to love. Without love, could our life find meaning?

God loves me — this reality sometimes seems almost beyond our reach.¹ But the day of a discovery can dawn: when I let myself be touched by God's love, my life opens up to others.²

As he welcomed those who came to him, Christ said: "Happy are the simple in heart!"³

A simple heart is attentive to living in the present moment,⁴ ready to go forward from beginning to new beginning.⁵

Faith is like a surge of very humble trusting, repeated again and again our whole life long.

1 God says to each person: "You are precious in my sight, and I love you." (Isaiah 43,4)

2 A thinker from Romania, Dimitru Staniloae, who had been in prison for his beliefs, wrote: "I looked for God in the people of my village, then in books and in ideas. But that brought me neither peace nor love. One day, while reading the Church Fathers [texts by Christians of the first centuries], I discovered that it was possible to encounter God really, through prayer. I gradually realized that God was close to me, that he loved me, and that if I let myself be filled by his love, my heart opened to others. I realized that love was a communion, with God and with others."

3 Matthew 5,3.

4 Worry uses up our vital energies and paralyses them. See Matthew 6,25-34.

5 In the fourth century, Saint Gregory of Nyssa wrote: We go "from one beginning to another by way of beginnings that are always new."

A simple heart accepts that it cannot understand everything in the gospel. It can say to God: "I am not relying on my own faith alone. Others understand what I cannot grasp, and they will shed light on my path." ⁶

Such simplicity awakens us to compassion; it makes us attentive to those who, all over the earth, are experiencing forms of abandonment or humiliation. ⁷

There are days when we have the impression that we are praying with almost nothing. We can feel as if we had been stripped bare, but God enables us to consent to this.

Even when a distance arises between God and us, we can entrust everything to him, placing everything in God's hands. ⁸

Happy, then, is the one who can say to Christ: "Christ, you know how difficult it is for me to express my desire for communion with you. ⁹ But your Holy Spirit reawakens within me the boldness to surrender myself to you.

"You see who I am. You were familiar with the human condition. ¹⁰ I do not want to hide anything in my heart from you. You know that I am sometimes pulled in different directions at the same time. But when my inner being experiences an emptiness, the thirst for your presence remains within me. And when I am unable to pray, you yourself are my prayer." ¹¹

Prayer is a treasure of the Gospel. ¹² It opens a way forward which leads us to love and to forgive.

Forgiveness can change both our heart and our life: severity and harsh judgements recede and leave room in our hearts for goodness and kindness. > 3

⁶ We can find support in the faith of all those who have gone before us, from the first Christians down to those of today.

⁷ Could God be behind our suffering? No. God is never the author of evil; God does not want human distress, still less wars, earthquakes, violent accidents.... God never inspires fear or anguish, but shares the suffering of those who are going through trials.

In some parts of the world, today there is an awakening of the conscience in the face of human suffering. Disconcerted by the incomprehensible trials of the innocent, many young people are asking themselves: how can we be witnesses to the Gospel? And by the lives they live, they seek to give tangible expression to the consolation of the Holy Spirit, to accomplish acts of solidarity.

⁸ God never wants to make us worry; God never imposes faith. Trust in God cannot be communicated by intellectual arguments.

⁹ Some children understand prayer more than we think. Happy are those who were awakened to communion in God by those closest to them when they were still very young.

¹⁰ Saint John writes these surprising words: "Among you stands someone whom you do not know." (John 1,26) Who is this "Someone" in our midst? It is Christ, the Risen One. We may hardly be aware of him, yet he remains close beside every human being.

¹¹ When we are by ourselves and do not know how to pray, our lips may remain closed, but in silence our soul is open before God and speaks to him. And the Holy Spirit prays within us. The Holy Spirit can even awaken in us an aspiration to contemplation. See Romans 8,26-27.

¹² Speaking about song in prayer, Olivier Clément wrote: "There is a whole tradition of calming repetition which can empty the intellect of its agitation and allow it to become ready for prayer. Some people, who know almost nothing of this mystery, are introduced to it in this way. Such prayer cannot be something too complicated. The essentials in Christianity can be expressed in a few words. There is a gentleness that comes with this repetitive singing, an inner peace." (From the book *Taizé, a Meaning for Life*, GIA Publications, 1997.) In this way we can sing: "Jesus Christ, inner light, do not let my darkness speak to me" (words from the fourth century); "All God can do is give his love" (seventh century); or again "You love us; your forgiveness and your presence bring to birth within us the brightness of praise."

The General Secretary of the United Nations, Mr. Koffi Annan

It is with great pleasure that I write to you on the occasion of your twenty-second annual meeting. Poised between the years 1999 and 2000, it is a symbol of the torch of hope that you, young people, are called to carry from one century to the next.

I am happy that you have decided to celebrate this new step together, beyond all your differences. I am glad too that you will be sharing this moment with the people of Warsaw, a city whose past bears the weight of a painful history in which the words tolerance, reconciliation, and fraternity stand out in their full significance. It is these values that the United Nations Organisation defends constantly, and your gathering is a beautiful expression of them.

I wish you an excellent meeting, and I offer you my best wishes for the coming year, with the hope that your faith, whatever name you give to it, may be the pledge of a future of peace for all human beings.

Patriarch Alexis II of Moscow

Beloved in Christ, organisers and participants in the meeting!

I send warm greetings for your remarkable meeting, which is bringing together thousands of young Christians representing not only eastern and western Europe, but the other continents as well. I notice with joy that each year these fraternal meetings of young people, with their aim of reflection together to shed light on the most essential questions of today, reach an ever wider circle of participants.

The central theme of your meeting this year is the call that God addresses to each one of us to be a witness to reconciliation. This theme has a special importance for today, when we are celebrating the two thousand years since the coming into the world of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The human race has reached this great Jubilee laden, as always, with a multitude of oppositions and of tragic conflicts.

The first causes of the disorders of the whole human race often have their roots in the inner situation of each individual person. All of us find ourselves constantly before the choice between good and evil, between light and darkness; and this fundamental decision is always there to be made once again: the Lord is standing like a stranger at the door of our heart and waits for us to open to him. He calls each one of us to himself: "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with them, and they with me." (Revelation 3,20)

You are gathered here, united in a common and benevolent impulse, in spite of belonging to different Christian denominations, in order not to remain deaf to this call, but to be with the Lord and to follow him. The future of the Church of Christ belongs to you. Manifest in yourselves the faithfulness of God, love of your neighbour, patience, reconciliation and forgiveness, and you will be the light (Matthew 5,14) which the world today needs so much.

May your meeting in fellowship today help you in all your efforts along the way as you follow Christ. May the blessing and the help of God remain with you all.

ПАТРИАРХ МОСКОВСКИЙ И ВСЕЯ РУСИ

Pope John Paul II

To Brother Roger of Taizé

"How good and pleasant it is to live as brothers and sisters in unity!" (Psalm 133,1)

The Taizé Community has chosen Warsaw as a new step in its "pilgrimage of trust on earth" from 28th December 1999 to 1st January 2000. On this occasion, I am glad to be with you in fervent prayer and to greet warmly all the young people gathered in Poland, wishing strongly that this twenty-second European meeting may be a special time of mutual welcome and fellowship, of prayer and contemplation, which may lead to an ever greater openness to God and to others.

A pilgrimage is a journey together as brothers and sisters; and in this jubilee year which is beginning, I encourage the participants to make the place of their meeting into what the scriptures say about Jerusalem, the holy city to which all the peoples are invited to come: a place of joy and thanksgiving where we know that God is present and where it is good to stand before him with the trust of children, ready in every way to do his will; a place where we become always more aware that God is a very loving and merciful Father, who makes the human race into one single family.

Since many of our contemporaries are deeply marked by violence, by the fear of tomorrow, or by anguished questioning about the meaning of life, Christians should be more than ever ardent and vigorous witnesses to the hope on which their lives are based. May young people not be afraid to let themselves be taken hold of by Christ and to find in his word the dynamism which will help them to build up their inner life and which will lead them to go to meet their brothers and sisters so as to build with them a new world founded on mutual love and on forgiveness. To each one of them, I say firmly: Wherever you live, in your families, in your schools, in your places of work and relaxation, always be servants of the Gospel of hope!

Dear friends, especially those who are bruised by the wounds of life, be sure that Christ is close to the simple in heart and that he calls everyone to true happiness; proclaim by your existence that it is a great thing to know that one is loved and recognised for oneself, and that each person is always a brother, a sister, to be welcomed and to be loved! At the threshold of the great Jubilee of the year 2000, dare to decide to follow Christ, to put your trust in him right through to the end, and to be messengers of his love!

"Peace to those of good will": two thousand years ago, a light rose upon the world. Today, Jesus himself is asking you to light a fire on earth, the flame of his charity. Once it is lit, this love cannot stop on the way, it must spread and shine and carry its warmth far and wide! Do not be afraid; the Spirit of the Lord goes before you and accompanies you on your way every day, as your guide and your light!

Invoking upon each one the intercession of Our Lady of Jasna Góra, I ask God to pour down generously his blessings upon you, dear Brother, on the Community of Taizé and on the organisers of this meeting, on all the young people present at Warsaw and upon the parishes and families which welcome them.

Joannes Paulus II

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. George Carey

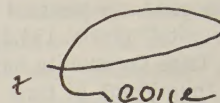
I am delighted to greet you at your 22nd Young Adults European Meeting in Warsaw on 28 December – 1 January 2000. I wish you every success in your time together.

As a new Millennium breaks upon us, may we who know Jesus Christ as Lord allow him to become the Lord of all our

memories and to transform memories of our past into a glorious vision of our future.

May we so truly love him that as with St. Paul we too will "reckon that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." (Romans 8,18)

With much affection from
a brother pilgrim,



MARCH : Isaiah 43,16-21

APRIL : Hebrews 11,8-16

JOHANNINE HOURS

At the heart of the people of Israel's faith is the account of the exodus from Egypt: God liberates the former slaves from the yoke of bondage and brings them safely across the sea. In celebrating the defeat of the Egyptians, the story in fact wishes to emphasize how powerless the forces of evil are to thwart God's loving designs.

And now, centuries later, an anonymous prophet in the land of exile seems to be encouraging his hearers to forget this great act of God! Is he attempting to subvert the religion of his contemporaries at the very moment when they are in such unfortunate straits?

What the prophet is combatting is rather the escape into nostalgia. Two attitudes are possible with respect to past events. We can use them to deplore the present, in a vain attempt to turn the clock back. Or else we can remember that the same God who saved those who went before us is still with us, ready and able to accomplish a similar wonder today. In this way, reflecting on the past becomes a springboard to deal with the present and believe in the future.

For this prophet, God is above all a permanent source of newness. By looking at what God did in the past, we become capable of discerning how he is at work here and now. We draw the courage and the hope to live fully in the present moment, convinced that the best is yet to come.

- When have I been tempted to view the past nostalgically?
- How can I use the past to find courage for the present and hope for the future?
- What changes in my life when I realize that God always creates something new?

Chapter 11 of the Letter to the Hebrews is a long meditation on faith in the life of God's people. Far from being a simple assent to intellectual truths, faith is the existential attitude of human beings who make their lives a pilgrimage. The best example of this is the figure of Abraham, who "left home without knowing where he was going." He was not, to be sure, merely drifting along; he walked in obedience to the call from God which separated him from his comfortable habits and opened unlimited horizons before him. The same thing was true for his wife Sara. Going beyond a certain human wisdom, she placed her confidence in the One who can even bring life out of death, with the result that, in her, the impossible became possible.

But the author of the epistle takes his analysis still further. Once the first concrete results of their trust in God were attained—a land, offspring—these women and men did not stop their journey. They continued their life as pilgrims because they realized that beyond any particular gifts that God may grant us, it is the relationship with God that is the greatest gift of all. The author calls this "the heavenly homeland" or "the City," and for him it is the ultimate goal of the pilgrimage of faith: a total sharing of life with God that involves a shared life among all those who have set out on the road. In the final analysis, trusting in God means discovering that, beyond the signs which God can and will offer us, lies a transformation of our being itself, by which we are gradually made able to enter into all the fullness of God.

- When was I required to live my faith as a departure towards the unknown? What allowed me to set out?
- What shape does the temptation to settle down take in my life? Where can I find the energy for a new beginning?

Gestures of Solidarity

The Taizé Community does not accept any gifts for itself; it lives entirely by its own work. By its work, the Community also takes on a part of the costs of the welcome: so many young people cannot contribute to the cost of their stay, sometimes because they come from far away, whether in Europe or from other continents, sometimes because of unemployment.

Moreover, for many years, through Operation Hope, the Community has given some support to the most marginalized people, in places like South Africa, Bangladesh, North Korea (a supply of maize), and Brazil.

IRELAND & UK: "Operation Hope", account number 50005576/53. Co-operative Bank PLC (code 089075) 84 West Street, SHEFFIELD S13SX, UK.

ASIA, AUSTRALIA, CANADA, NEW ZEALAND, etc.: gifts can be sent in the same way as subscriptions to the Letter from Taizé, making sure to indicate with your payment "for Operation Hope".

USA: Operation Hope c/o Taizé, 413 W.48th Street, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10036.

MEETINGS

Brothers of the Taizé Community will be taking part in meetings in the places listed below. Fuller information from the contact persons and at <http://www.taize.fr>

Australia

Tasmania: 28 - 30 April

Contact Revd Bob Faser, Ph: 03 6234 2543.

email: tcc@trump.net.au

Western Australia: 5 - 7 May

Revd Eira Clapton, Ph: 08 9221 1732,

email: cragwestaust@ozemail.com.au

South Australia: 12 - 15 May

Brian Phillips, Ph. 08 8202 5111(o) and 08 2223 3924,

email: brianph@merlin.net.au

Northern Territory: 17 May

Revd Alan Kitchingnan, Ph. 08 8922 1602

Queensland: 19 - 21 May

Revd Russell Morris, Ph: 07 3369 6792,

email: russellm@tpg.com.au

Victoria: 26 - 28 May

Victoria Council of Churches, Causeway House,

The Causeway, Melbourne, Ph: Cait McMahon,

03 9532 4602. email: petecait@netspace.net.au

NSW / ACT: 2 - 11 June

NSW Ecumenical Council, Level 6, 379 Kent Street,

Sydney, Ph. 02 9299 2215, Fax 02 9262 4514,

email: jjohnston@ncca.org.au

New Zealand

Easter Experience, 20 to 23 April

easter.tri-series@clear.net.nz, Christopher Duthie-Jung,

Catholic Centre, PO Box 1937, Wellington.

Letter from Taizé

Annual subscription

Ordinary subscription: 40 FF(France 30 FF)

Supporting subscription: 75 or 150 FF

Airmail subscription (outside Europe only): 50 FF

Means of payment:

- by credit card Visa, Mastercard, Eurocard, Carte Bleue: send the number of your card and dates of validity to Taizé, and say what sum in French Francs you wish to transfer.
- by international Giro transfer in French Francs addressed to: Lettre de Taizé, CCP 20041-01007 -0061446M038-71 or CCP LYON 614 46 M.
- by cheque in French Francs to Lettre de Taizé, F-71250 Taizé Communauté, made payable through Société Générale. Eurocheques in French Francs accepted.
- In certain countries it is possible to pay within the country:

Australia: Airmail: \$15 - Letter from Taizé, P.O. Box 769, North Sydney, NSW 2059

Canada: Airmail: \$12 - Letter from Taizé c/o Karen Koester, 101, 10340-123 Street, Edmonton, Alberta T5N 1N6.

Ireland: £5.50 - Letter from Taizé, c/o 41 Dartmouth Square, Dublin 6.

New Zealand: Airmail: \$18 - c/o Jenny Chisholm, 13 Arden Way, Wilton, Wellington.

UK: £4.50 - Letter from Taizé, c/o D.S. & E.J. Thorpe, 25, Sleningford Road, Crossflatts, Bingley, BD16 2SF.

USA: Airmail: \$11 - Letter from Taizé, 132 Wagon Road, Roslyn Heights, NY 11577.

For Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Hungary, India, Italy, Korea, Netherlands, Norway, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden, write to Taizé to ask for the address in your country.

Correspondence:

Letter from Taizé, 71250 Taizé-Communauté, France

e-mail: lettre@taize.fr

Lettre 210 - DRA Comm. de Taizé - Com. par. 50798 - DL 907 Ateliers et Presses de Taizé

These short readings are those read, day by day, at community prayer in Taizé. The Bible reference given indicates a slightly longer passage.

5 SUN We carry the treasure of God's glory in earthen vessels so that it may be quite clear that the radiance comes from God, not from us.

6 Mon The Lord says: You are precious in my eyes, I value you and I love you.

7 Tue Jesus said: The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life for the forgiveness of many.

8 Wed **ASH WEDNESDAY** Jesus said: When you give, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your generosity is secret. And your Father, who sees all that is done in secret, will reward you.

1 Wed Paul writes: The whole of creation has been groaning as in childbirth up to the present time. And we too groan inwardly as we wait with eagerness for our bodies to be set free.

2 Thu Jesus said: Give to anyone who asks you, and if anyone wants to borrow, do not turn away.

3 Fri Give praise to the Lord! It is good to sing praises to the one who heals the broken-hearted and binds up their wounds.

4 Sat Accept one another just as Christ accepted you, for the glory of God.

12 SUN Jesus said: The kingdom of God is close at hand. Repent and believe the good news of the Gospel.

13 Mon Jesus said to someone rich: You lack one thing. Go, sell everything you have and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.

14 Tue Let yourselves be guided by the Spirit and you will not be under the Law. For the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, gentleness, trust in others and self-control.

15 Wed Jesus said: Happy are the clear in heart, for they shall see God.

16 Thu You do well to pay attention to the word of the prophets, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.

17 Fri Jesus said: Love your enemies and pray for those who mistreat you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven.

18 Sat Paul writes: When overburdened to the point of despair, we learnt to rely, not on ourselves, but on God who raises the dead to life.

19 SUN **ST JOSEPH** Jesus was transfigured in the presence of his disciples. And a cloud covered them with its shadow, and from the cloud a voice came, saying, "This is my beloved Son, listen to him."

20 Mon Jesus said: Give to those in need. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure that will not fail, in heaven where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

21 Tue Seek God in simplicity of heart; for the Lord reveals himself to those who do not refuse him their trust.

22 Wed Jesus said: Learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

23 Thu Love is patient and kind. Love does not seek its own advantage, it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but finds its joy in the truth.

24 Fri Since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, to run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, who leads us in our faith and brings it to perfection.

25 Sat Mary said to the angel: I am the Lord's servant, let it happen to me as you have said.

26 SUN We proclaim Christ crucified, which to the nations is foolishness, but to those whom God has called it is Christ, the strength and the wisdom of God.

27 Mon Above all else, watch over your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.

28 Tue The Lord says: I shall put my law deep within them, I shall write it on their hearts. I shall be their God and they will be my people.

29 Wed James writes: Let no one say when they are tempted, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone.

30 Thu Whoever loves their brother or sister lives in the light and need not be afraid of stumbling.

31 Fri Jesus said: Do not be anxious about your life... Your Father in heaven knows what you need. Do not worry about tomorrow: tomorrow will take care of itself.

MARCH

MEDITATING ON THE WORD

These short readings are those read, day by day, at community prayer in Taizé. The Bible reference given indicates a slightly longer passage.

2 SUN Jn 3,14-21
God did not send his Son into the world to judge the world, but so that the world might be saved through him.

3 MON 1 P 5,6-11
Peter writes: Cast all your anxiety on God, because God cares for you.

4 TUE Is 58,7-10
If you do away with the accusing finger and malicious talk, if you give what is yours for the hungry, then your light will rise in the darkness and your darkest hour will be like the middle of the day.

5 WED 1 Jn 1,1-7
This is what we have heard from Christ: God is light, in him there is no darkness at all.

6 THU Ep 4,25-32
Forgive one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

7 FRI Lk 14,1-14
Jesus said: When you have a dinner, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame and the blind, and you will be blessed, for they have no means to repay you.

8 SAT 2 Co 12,1-10
Paul writes: God said to me: My grace is sufficient for you, for my strength is made perfect in weakness.

9 SUN Jn 12,20-33
Jesus said: Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant will also be.

10 MON 1 Jn 1,5-7
If we walk in the light, as God is in the light, we are in communion with one another.

11 TUE Is 49,1-6
The Lord says: It is not enough for you to be my servant. I shall make you a light to the nations so that my salvation may reach the furthest corners of the earth.

12 WED Col 3,12-17
May the peace of Christ reign in your hearts, because it is for this that you were called together in one Body.

13 THU Rv 2,8-11
The Lord says: I know your trials and your poverty, yet you are rich: do not fear suffering, stay faithful until death and I will give you the crown of life.

14 FRI Jn 16,20-22
Before his passion, Jesus said to his disciples: Now you are sad, but I shall see you again and your hearts will be full of joy. And that joy no one shall take from you.

15 SAT Rm 8,31-39
St. Paul writes: I am certain of this: neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus.

16 SUN Jn 12,12-16
PALM SUNDAY
To enter Jerusalem, Jesus found a young donkey and sat upon it, as it is written, "Do not be afraid, daughter of Zion. Look, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt!"

17 MON Mt 26,36-46
Jesus said to his disciples: Stay alert and pray in order to withstand the trial. The spirit is willing, but human nature is weak.

18 TUE Mk 14,32-42
At Gethsemane, Jesus prayed saying: Father, everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me; yet not what I will, but what you will.

19 WED Jn 18,33-37
Jesus said to Pilate: For this I was born, and for this I came into the world: to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice.

20 THU Lk 23,33-34
On the cross, Jesus said: Father, forgive them; they do not know what they are doing.

21 FRI Mk 15,16-27
GOOD FRIDAY
They led Jesus out to crucify him. They compelled a passer-by, who was coming in from the country, to carry his cross; it was Simon of Cyrene. They brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha where they crucified him.

22 SAT 1 P 3,18-22
Christ was put to death in the body and raised to life in the Spirit. And in the Spirit he also went to announce the Gospel to those who once had refused to believe.

23 SUN Jn 20,1-9
EASTER DAY
When Jesus' disciple entered the empty tomb, he saw and believed.

24 MON Col 3,1-5
Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.

25 TUE Mk 16,15-20
ST MARK
After the Ascension of Jesus, the disciples went out and proclaimed the Gospel everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word.

26 WED Rv 3,20-22
The Risen Christ says: I stand at the door, knocking. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with them, and they with me.

27 THU Am 5,4-24
God says: Seek me and you shall live. Let justice flow like water, and righteousness like an unfailing stream.

28 FRI 1 Jn 4,12-21
Let us love, since God loved us first. Anyone who does not love the brother or sister they see cannot love God whom they do not see.

29 SAT Jn 4,5-42
Jesus said: Anyone who drinks the water I give will never be thirsty again. The water I give them will become a spring of water within them, welling up to eternal life.

30 SUN Jn 20,19-23
The Risen Christ said to the disciples: "Peace be with you. As the Father sent me, so am I sending you." Then he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit."

APRIL

MEDITATING ON THE WORD

13 Our brothers in Taizé as well as those who live in other parts of the world, often among the very poor, are aware that the vocation of our community calls us to be utterly simple. That means not imposing ourselves, not being spiritual masters, but people who listen and who try to understand. We have discovered that with a great simplicity of heart, often with very limited means, we can be enabled to live out a hospitality which we did not believe we were capable of. We have been welcoming young people for so many years. They spend a week at Taizé, but we do not organise them into a movement centred on our community.

14 "The evil of the past, full of separations and of violence, remains within us and nourishes fear and hatred. Therefore we must allow God to wipe away the evil of the past." (Patriarch Athenagoras of Constantinople.)

15 The year 2000 is a time marked out for realising forgiveness and reconciliation in concrete ways, not only among Christians, but in the different situations round about us, with non-believers too. At Taizé, pursuing the "pilgrimage of trust on earth", every Friday of the year 2000 will be dedicated to reflection and prayer in order to look for ways of living out forgiveness, with the joy that it sustains.

16 During his visit to Taizé on 5th October 1986, Pope John Paul II spoke these words:

...you will be instrumental in making sure that the effort desired by Christ to recover the visible unity of his Body in the full communion of one and the same faith never slackens. You know how much I personally consider ecumenism a necessity incumbent upon me, a pastoral priority in my ministry for which I count on your prayer. "By desiring to be yourselves a 'parable of community,' you will help all you meet to be faithful to their church affiliation, the fruit of their education and their choice in conscience, but also to enter more and more deeply into the mystery of communion that the Church is in God's plan."

17 Acts 2,17.

18 John 14,16.

19 In this year 2000, the "Jubilee" invites us to welcome the spirit of "jubilation", not only for a certain length of time, but our whole life long. Jubilation in the Holy Spirit is a joy that Jesus experienced (Luke 10,21) and which we can also live out ourselves. It is intimately connected with the presence of the Holy Spirit in us.

And we become capable of seeking to understand rather than to be understood. ¹³

All who root their lives in forgiveness are able to pass through rock-hard situations like the water of a stream which, in early springtime, makes its way through the still-frozen ground.

However meagre our resources, one of today's most urgent tasks is to bring about understanding where there are oppositions. Certain memories from the past are enough to keep individuals or nations apart.

Nothing is more tenacious than the memory of past wounds and humiliations. ¹⁴ When we seek tirelessly to forgive and to be reconciled, a future opens up beyond all our expectations. ¹⁵

And what is true for each person is true as well in that mystery of communion which is the Body of Christ, his Church. ¹⁶

Can we not find everywhere humble men and women who are preparing the paths of the future? What fascinates them is to let a hope shine out. The most profound changes are not necessarily determined by prestigious talents or great expertise but, more than we suppose, by a burning charity.

The Holy Spirit, poured out on every human being, ¹⁷ gives freedom and spontaneity. The Spirit restores a zest for life to those who had lost it, and comes to deliver us from discouragement. Neither doubts nor the impression that God is silent can take his Holy Spirit away from us.

All who open themselves to the breath of the Spirit and welcome it by humble listening find themselves setting out on an inner adventure.

In the great troubles of our life, the Holy Spirit is a support, a comfort, ¹⁸ in whom the wellsprings of

jubilant,¹⁹ of joy light as a feather, are always offered. And this joy brings us closer to those who are going through suffering.²⁰

Six centuries before the coming of Christ, God spoke these challenging words: "Forget what has gone before; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?"²¹

Yes, we are astonished by an unsuspected joy: the Holy Spirit wants to turn us into beings who are utterly transparent, like the sky on a spring day.

The Gospel bears within it such a radiant hope and such a call to joy that we would like to communicate them to people close at hand and far away, by going even to the point of giving ourselves.

Where is the source of hope and of joy? It is in God, who tirelessly seeks us out and finds in us the profound beauty of the human soul.

PRAYERS

Holy Spirit, do not let our hearts be troubled; reassure us in our darkness; give us joy; and we will wait in silence and in peace for light from the Gospel to dawn upon us.

Christ Jesus, you discern a contemplative longing in the deepest part of our being: a thirst fills our soul, to abandon ourselves in you.

Jesus our hope, with the little that we understand of the Gospel, you enable us to discover what you want of us.

Christ Jesus, when we pray, our poor words are often scarcely able to express our desire for communion with you, but already you welcome us.

²⁰ Olivier Clément wrote this meditation: "Some people will ask how it is possible to rejoice, considering that there can be such trials in a human life. We carry within us a great joy, but that great joy is not going to make us insensible to the suffering of other people. On the contrary, it can make us even more sensitive, and we will be able both to carry deep within us this great joy of the risen Christ and to enter profoundly into the distress of our neighbour at the same time. We must be open to sadness while at the same time bearing joy within us, because we know that ultimately the resurrection will have the last word." (From the book *Taizé, a Meaning for Life*.)

²¹ Isaiah 43,18-19.